

A2 [0022] The silicon nitride sintered body to use as a wear resistant member contains particles of titanium nitride having a long axis of 1  $\mu\text{m}$  or less in the range of from 0.2 to 5% by mass.

When the content of titanium nitride is less than 0.2% by mass, an effect of improving performance due to titanium nitride cannot be sufficiently obtained. On the other hand, when the content of titanium nitride exceeds 5% by mass, flexural strength, fracture toughness and rolling fatigue life of the sintered body deteriorate on the contrary. The content of titanium nitride is more preferable to be in the range of from 0.5 to 4% by mass.

Please amend paragraph [0026] at pages 11-12 to read as follows:

A3 [0026] In consideration of the aforementioned influence of the particles of titanium nitride, in the present invention, the particles of titanium nitride having a long axis of 1  $\mu\text{m}$  or less are dispersed in the silicon nitride sintered body. The long axis of the particles of titanium nitride is more preferable to be 0.5  $\mu\text{m}$  or less. The long axis in the present invention is a length of the longest diagonal of the particle of titanium nitride. There is no problem when a size of a particle of titanium nitride can be measured 3-dimensionally. However, it is general practice to use a simplified method. In the simplified method, an enlarged photograph of an arbitrary unit area (100 x 100  $\mu\text{m}$ , for instance) is taken, the longest diagonal of the particles of titanium nitride present in the enlarged photograph being measured as a long axis to use. In particular, also in the shape measurement of the roundish titanium nitride particle described below, the use of an enlarged photograph is effective.

Please amend paragraph [0095] at pages 44-45 to read as follows:

A4 [0095] As evident from Table 6, it is found that all of the bearing balls involving Embodiments of the present invention have excellent properties. Though not shown in the Table, all of the grain boundary phases are formed of Si-R-Al-O-N compound. In embodiments where MgO is added, the grain boundary phase is formed of Si-R0Al-Mg-O-N compound. There is found neither of the coagulation nor solution of the titanium nitride